

16 November 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Intelligence)

ATTENTION: Assistant to DD/I (Admin)

FROM: Assistant Director for Basic Intelligence

SUBJECT: Need For and Use Of the NIS

REFERENCE: Memorandum for AD/BI from  
Assistant to the DD/I (Admin)  
dated 31 October 1956, subject:  
Bureau of the Budget Hearings

1. The need for the NIS was first determined by the NSC which established the program by NSC Intelligence Directive No. 3 of 13 January 1948. Since that time the need for and usefulness of the NIS has been under continuing study by the Interagency NIS Committee. Further, a comprehensive survey was conducted of the NIS users in both the Washington intelligence community and the field to ascertain their views in the light of their experience with the NIS. The findings of these examinations have served to confirm the judgment of the NSC that the NIS is necessary to the fulfillment of essential basic intelligence requirements of our Government. These findings reflect the considered opinions of government officials who are actually engaged in the intelligence and operational activities which use the NIS extensively in carrying out their official missions, and they are, therefore, the most competent and best qualified individuals in government to pass judgment on the need and value of the NIS. Illustrative of such opinions are the examples cited in attachment hereto (Tab A).

2. Reaffirmation of the need for, and worth of, the NIS Program is also contained in the report to the Congress on intelligence activities by the Clark Task Force of the Hoover Commission wherein it is stated:

The National Intelligence Survey is an invaluable publication which provides the essential elements of basic intelligence on all areas of the world. While its production involves an extensive and expensive effort, all members of the Intelligence community derive an immediate benefit from the contributions they make to it and profit from the final product. There always will be a continuing requirement for keeping this survey up to date.

3. The fundamental mission of the NIS Program is to develop the basic intelligence required by the Government in the event of another war, and to have that intelligence ready to use prior to the beginning of hostilities. However, the NIS has proved to be an extremely valuable intelligence tool under present conditions as well, to both the high level users for whom the NIS is primarily designed, and to lower echelons of government which it serves in a variety of ways. The degree of usefulness to the latter varies considerably, of course, because of the difference in functions and missions of these secondary users. Many of the Foreign Service Posts are using the NIS extensively and finding it extremely useful, as evidenced by the comments listed in the attached Tab B.

4. However, it has been found that officers at some posts are not making full use of the NIS because they apparently are unaware of it, or because in some posts the NIS is filed in such a manner as to make it practically inaccessible. The State Department is cognizant of this situation and has taken steps to correct it (Tab C).

5. With respect to the use of the NIS by Foreign Service Officers on field assignments it must be remembered that these personnel are essentially collectors of information from which the NIS is compiled, and that the more experienced of them already have an intimate knowledge of the area in which they are stationed. The use of the NIS at these posts is, therefore, largely as a general reference source, as a guide to collection efforts, and as source materials for briefing new personnel.

However, these Foreign Service Officers in the field assist in the preparation of the NIS by reviewing NIS drafts on their areas and furnishing constructive comments and additional data to improve coverage and presentation. Examples of such comments from the areas in which the Bureau representative received such negative responses to his inquiries on the NIS are attached as Tab D.

6. In connection with the question of whether the NIS is being published in its most useful form the preponderance of weight in resolving this question must be given to the views of those for whom the NIS is primarily designed. The format of the NIS is the result of extensive examination and study of all previous basic intelligence studies undertaken by the U.S. [REDACTED] 25X1X7 It reflects a consensus of the Intelligence agencies for basic intelligence necessary to fully satisfy the requirements by the Department of Defense for strategic planning and high level operational planning, and by the Department of State for use in formulating and executing U.S. foreign policy.

7. The extent of detail in the NIS is under continuing examination by the NIS Committee. For example, psychological warfare requirements have extended the usefulness of the Sociological and Political coverage, while the more recent development of basic intelligence requirements in the field of International Communism will round out a subject that has never been adequately dealt with. Comprehensive treatment of the various topics is presented in the main body of the NIS. Topics requiring more extensive treatment, such as Ports and Naval Facilities, are covered in NIS Supplements. A brief summary of the basic intelligence on each NIS area is contained in Chapter I which contains a Master Index for quick reference to the more detailed treatment of the other NIS Chapters and Supplements. The NIS format thus provides to a reasonable degree different levels of detail to serve a variety of end users.

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Enclosures :

1. Tab A
2. Tab B
3. Tab C
4. Tab D



EVALUATION OF THE NIS

"The greatest value of the NIS derives from its peacetime use in the preparation of plans and studies which must be completed prior to the advent of war or other crises. In the event of a critical situation or a general war, the NIS would still be of great value to SHAPE and its Major Subordinate Commands. (U.S. National Military Representative, SHAPE)

The NIS is the most complete intelligence reference source available to this Command. It is used in the preparation of plans and estimates of capabilities. For those areas of Europe not of immediate intelligence interest to USAREUR, the NIS has frequently proved to be the only source of comprehensive intelligence data. For instance, during the tense Trieste situation, the NIS was an invaluable reference document.

In the event of a critical situation in Central Europe, the immediate availability of the NIS would be of great value, since virtually no other handbooks or documents of similar scope are known to exist. (AC of S, G-2, Headquarters, US Army, Europe)

In the event of a critical situation or a general war the immediate availability of up-to-date NIS would be of great value to G-4. Specifically, G-4 would use NIS in event of war to:

(1) Fill the immediate need for basic intelligence on areas into which U.S. troops will be deployed and upon which to base logistic plans.

(2) Take immediate steps to determine and analyze the environmental stresses found in the area of engagement in terms of effect on Army materiel and supplies.  
(AC of S, G-4, DA)

The NIS would be of great value to Engineer military planners. More detailed Engineer intelligence would be and always is required but an available NIS would certainly make the planning and preparation of this detailed intelligence an easier and more orderly task. (Chief of Engineers, DA)

' In the event of a critical situation, or general war, the immediate availability of the National Intelligence Survey would be of great value to the Marine Corps. This intelligence would provide the intelligence base for staff planning.'

(Commandant, US Marine Corps)

' Great value. Immediate availability of basic reference publications which contain comprehensive background information would be invaluable to the production of theater level estimates, studies, intelligence annexes, etc.'

(Commander-in-Chief, US Pacific Fleet)

' The NIS would be of great value by providing TAC with the basic intelligence that would be necessary to perform TAC's mission as set forth in the Emergency War Plan. In addition, the NIS would provide valuable information for E and E instruction, and back-up information for PI and target material.'

(Headquarters, Tactical Air Command)

' In the event of a critical situation or general war, the NIS would be of great value especially in planning any necessary expansion of existing facilities of the Command.'

(Headquarters, Caribbean Air Command)

' The NIS is used here primarily as a reference work, and as such it is extremely valuable. It is consulted by newly-assigned officers as a means of obtaining essential information of a background nature on Brazil, and for this purpose it is the only authoritative source available which contains the necessary material in one relatively condensed and easily readable document...

' The Survey is also useful to Embassy Officers as a digest of material which must to a considerable degree form the basis for the determination of United States policy toward Brazil. It therefore is helpful in clarifying basic policies which the Embassy is to follow and implement.'

(American Embassy, Rio de Janeiro)

' . . . In the event of a critical situation or a general war the immediate availability of the NIS would be of great value. The completed NIS would provide the most comprehensive overall treatment of this area extant and could be used as a common reference document available to all high civilian and military officers. . . '

(American Embassy, Saigon)